

ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Back to the Future: A Thriving Downtown Amenia

"Amenia requires [volunteer] committees such as ours to ensure that the work [of the Town] does not swamp the [Town] Board..." says Peter Riva, 2004 chair of the the Community Enhancement Committee. The "work" of this committee is the business of planning for and refurbishing each of our hamlets to attract economic growth without destroying the character of the town. Because this work is both time-consuming and important, a group of volunteers has undertaken it under the authorization and oversight of the Town Board

Small towns "need to fight to be heard, and then fight for the funds," says Riva, referring to the problems a town like Amenia faces trying to get help from county, state, and grant-making organizations. Taking an active part in this fight is one of the numerous ways the Committee is working for the town.

Attracting new business to Amenia has been an important aim for decades, and the current Enhancement Committee seems finally to be making *real* progress toward this goal. The Committee's Technology subcommittee (headed by Nan Seeburger) helped produce the Technology Fair last March. This day-long event was of interest to the entire region, but

was held at Silo Ridge, calling attention to the area and our great location directly linked to Westchester and New York City by rail. The fair, which will be an annual event, was produced in cooperation with the new Chamber of Commerce, formed last year, "as a direct result of the Enhancement Committee's urging," according to Riva. By

his estimate, the new Chamber has already donated services and expertise worth more than \$ 40,000 to the town. The Chamber brings town businesses together as a community, giving them a single, powerful voice to use in telling the rest of Dutchess County, New York State, and the country, about opportunities for business in Amenia.

SMALL TOWNS "NEED TO FIGHT TO BE HEARD, AND THEN FIGHT FOR THE FUNDS"

*Peter Riva, Chairman
The Community Enhancement Committee*

The Committee works with the Town Board, some of whose members are on the Enhancement

Committee. The Committee does not "decide or implement anything except that which the Town Board has voted to have us undertake," says Riva. Andy Durbridge, a landscape designer by profession who is head of the subcommittee on Streetscapes, adds, "We do not want to work in isolation. We rely on the Town Board to review our work and make overlays with other functions and committees of the town." The principal activity of the Committee is to create down-



ZONE 1- EAST MAIN STREET

Schematic Plan 2

Amenia Streetscape Enhancement

Prepared by: Mark K. Morrison Associates, Ltd.
Landscape Architecture

KEY:

- PROPOSED BRICK PAVING
- PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN LIGHT
- PROPOSED STREET TREE
- PROPOSED BUMP-OUT WITH CROSSWALK
- PROPOSED PARKING LOT SCREENING

town environments that attract businesses and customers for those businesses. Therefore, the design of the area must include not only attractive building facades and safe pedestrian walkways, but also ways to slow traffic so it doesn't simply pass through. To do that, the Committee is working with Dutchess County Planning, the Department of Transportation, and other agencies. Among the most important of

this Committee's responsibilities is finding funding for what needs to be done.

Or, as Riva puts it, "[There are] three main areas of activity at the present time. As well as representing a long-term consideration important to the town's well-being, each of these three goals points to immediate, specific things to be done:

[1] planning for the future – including improving the look of downtown and attracting more business (and the tax revenue that comes with it);

[2] supporting maximum openness in the town government – for example, by putting all details of the improvement proposals on the Enhancement Committee website;

[3] highlighting our cultural history – identifying and working to preserve what is good about Amenia, what can make our town attractive to live in, as well as inviting to visit and do business in."

Subcommittees have the responsibility of developing and overseeing the specific projects that grow out of these broad concerns. Durbridge's subcommittee on Streetscapes is working with a professional firm, Mark Morrison Associates, to develop an achievable plan for improving town streets, beginning with East Main Street and Mechanic Street from Main to Town Hall. Their work to date – a coordinated set of suggestions for improvement of sidewalks, lighting fixtures, and plantings – can be viewed on the Enhancement Committee website:

www.ameniany.org/enhancement_committee.htm

This website itself represents another Committee project. The site is a helpful, well-organized "place" where town residents and potential visitors can go to find town information of all kinds. One goal is to make the processes of planning for the future and day-to-day operation more open by providing frequently updated information about them. Another goal, just as important, is to invite feedback from town residents, who are encouraged to use the many interactive links the site contains.

Other Enhancement Committee projects that are well underway include a review of building facades, creating a town park/recreation area, encouraging more business, and finding and acquiring land for a recreation area. Finally,



Existing View East on Main Street

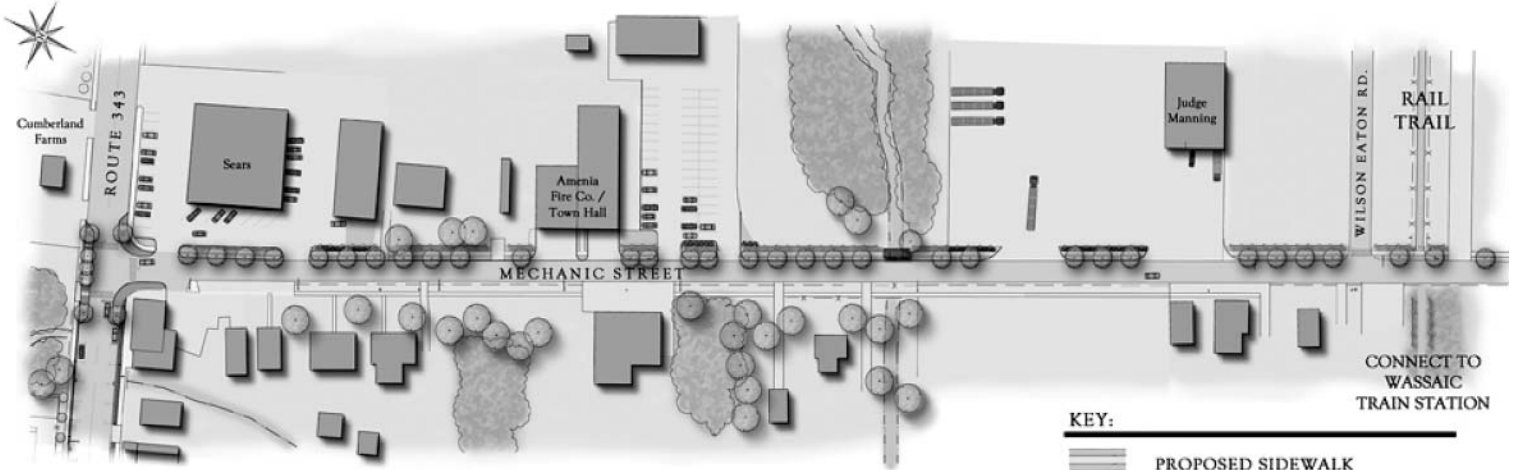


Proposed View East on Main Street - Scheme 2, Option 2

Amenia Streetscape Enhancement

Prepared by: Mark K. Morrison Associates, Ltd.
Landscape Architecture

ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE



ZONE 2- MECHANIC STREET








Existing View North on Mechanic Street near Stream



Proposed View North on Mechanic Street near Stream

KEY:

-  PROPOSED SIDEWALK
-  PROPOSED STREET TREES
-  PROPOSED WOOD FENCE AT R.O.W.
-  PROPOSED CROSSWALK
-  PROPOSED BRIDGE OVER STREAM

Councilman Jim Devine's Townscape subcommittee oversees seasonal decorations, maintenance of plantings, and other non-architectural features of town appearance.

In addition to the \$40,000 in donated services arranged by the Enhancement Committee, it also won a \$100,000 grant from the Greenway Agency in November 2002. The success of this effort suggests the possibility of more such aid in the future. And, as Peter Riva says, "It is the Enhancement Committee, acting on behalf of the Town Board, that will investigate and realize these possibilities." According to Riva, it is the volunteers and the Committee's activities that small town boards need, "if we are to survive and thrive." Let's do both.

MEMBERS: Peter Riva, Andy Durbridge, Councilman Jim Devine, Mimi Babcock, Katharine Dunlop, Nan Seeburger, Janet Kovalcik, Dolores Holland, Councilwoman Vicki Doyle, Julie Denny, Steve Benardete, Herb Eschbach, Monique Montaigne, Colette Maas, Leo Blackman, Lisa Coon, Wayne Euvrard, Mary Ann Wilkens, and Bill and Janet Burke.

To find out about the next meeting of any subcommittee of interest to you, please call the subcommittee head: Streetscapes–Andy Durbridge; Facades–Mimi Babcock; Acquisitions–Katherine Dunlop; Townscape–Jim Devine; Communication and Development (Technology)–Nan Seeburger.



Existing View North on Mechanic Street near Sears



Proposed View North on Mechanic Street near Sears

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